8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the primary goals of this Annual Safety Report is to provide a mechanism to evaluate safety efforts and make recommendations to improve these efforts. The following recommendations are offered along with a discussion of the staffing and budget that would be required to implement them.

8.1. Roadside Objects

Run-off-road collisions were the most common accident type in 2003, and accounted for seven of the fourteen fatal accidents. Given the prevalence of this accident type, further attention is warranted.

Run-off-road collisions are further categorized according to the object encountered during the collision. Guardrails and other traffic barriers were the most frequently struck objects. Current practices address barrier collisions by upgrading older barrier systems to comply with new standards. Barrier systems are upgraded according to the guardrail retrofit priority list, and can also be upgraded when damaged.

Isolated fixed objects (utility poles, fences, trees, signs and mailboxes) were involved in nearly two-thirds of the run-off-road collisions. Utility poles were the mostly frequently struck isolated fixed objects. The countywide guardrail program addresses utility poles that have been struck more than two times in a ten-year period on a case-by-case basis, and other roadside objects using a corridor approach.

Given the number of utility pole collisions, adding a relocation requirement for the poles closest to the edge of the roadway should be seriously considered. King County is currently working with utility companies to revise the Utility Franchise Agreement, and discussion of such a requirement is recommended.

This recommendation would involve little additional effort since discussions are currently underway.

8.2. GIS Capability

The ability to review collision locations on a Geographical Information System (GIS) database could provide significant benefits. For example, contour or spot density maps would be useful in visually identifying problem areas, particularly with pedestrian and bicycle accidents. Other uses include comparing accident experience with other information that is currently available in King County's GIS database (e.g. CIP projects or guardrail locations).

The value of adding collision information to the GIS database has been recognized, and preliminary efforts have been made to accomplish this. The preliminary work has indicated that significant resources will probably be required, including a budget and possibly additional staffing. Efforts continue, however, it is unclear that these efforts will be sufficient to accomplish the task.

A review of the cost and staffing requirements to complete this project within a one-year time frame is recommended. The information obtained in this review could then be used to determine the feasibility of a GIS conversion.

8.3. Motorcycle Collisions

Although the change may be due to statistical fluctuation, motorcycle collisions have increased by 44% since 1999. In addition, nearly 90% of motorcycle collisions result in injuries or fatalities. Given this severity and the increase in the number of accidents, further effort may be warranted. These efforts could include public service announcements, additional enforcement, and discussion with State officials regarding licensing requirements and driver education. These items have moderate cost implications, but would be unlikely to require additional staffing.

8.4. Younger Drivers

Over one-third of the drivers involved in collisions during 2003 were between 16 and 24 years old. Education and outreach for younger drivers may be an appropriate area for additional focus.

The State of Washington recently initiated graduated licensing requirements for younger drivers. Additional efforts could include public service announcements, visits to local high schools, and discussion with State officials regarding licensing requirements and driver education. These items have moderate cost implications, but would be unlikely to require additional staffing.

8.5. "Top Ten" Arterials

The annual accident rate book provides accident rates for King County's arterial roadways. The ten roadways with the highest accident rates were reviewed for planned or recently completed improvement projects (see Table 10 in Section 7.4). On six of these roadways, no safety improvement projects are currently planned, or the planned projects are pedestrian or developer projects that are not expected to significantly reduce the accident rate.

Review of these six arterials for possible safety improvement projects is recommended. This recommendation would involve some staff effort but is not expected to require additional staffing or budget. Proposed improvements could be addressed within existing programs. For example, larger projects could be added to the CIP. In addition, it is recommended that the top ten arterials be reviewed on an annual basis and safety projects recommended where appropriate.